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HEADSHIP AND SUBMISSION, OR EQUALITY:  
WHAT'S A PASTOR TO SAY

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Pastoral Ministries  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Theology

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by  
Jerry Allen Singleton  
May 1978

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## INTRODUCTION

» This book is intended to provide pastors with basic information and some insights concerning the feminist challenge to the traditional marital roles of headship and submission espoused by evangelical Christendom. It is expected that this information will be a help to pastors counseling young married couples who have questions or problems concerning husband-wife roles. This book was written with Christian couples in mind who accept the authority of God and His Word over their lives. It is the author's belief that no marriage can be what it should be if the partners are not Christians, because no person can be what he should be apart from Jesus Christ.

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## CHAPTER I

### WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Almost without exception we have found in counseling that when there have been other serious problems in a marriage, there has also been a problem with the husband-wife role failure usually taking the form of role reversal.<sup>1</sup>

The above quote from Jay Adams gives the essence of the reason for writing this book. But this insight of Adams', while shared by many able and competent marriage counselors, only begins to expose the complex problem associated with husband-wife roles.

The problem has, no doubt, been building since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden and started behaving like fallen creatures. It was a subdued problem for much of the history of mankind. But the advent of the feminist movement has brought the problem of marital roles under careful scrutiny.

Why did things suddenly come to a head? Vera and David Mace summarized the situation as women having more free time and less important roles. The pressure of this phenomenon kept building till the lid just blew off.<sup>2</sup> Marabel Morgan says, "Today, in addition to all the chores of housework --and increasingly, the additional demands of an outside job as well--the American housewife is suffering from a fundamental uncertainty about what a housewife is or should be."<sup>3</sup>



Dorothy Sayers says that being classified as a woman is not bad, but being denied human rights as an individual because of that classification is repugnant.<sup>4</sup>

The traditional roles of men and women in general, and husbands and wives in particular, are being challenged. The challenge is coming primarily from the women's side because theirs is the greater dissatisfaction. Even a brief scan of the literature will reveal that the challenge to tradition is strong and violent. There are numerous issues in contention, but there is one issue concerning the husband-wife roles that stands out as the crux. That issue is the two-pronged question of headship and submission.

The traditional concept of headship views the husband as being the highest authority within the family unit, the "head" of the family. The traditional responsibility of the wife is submission to the authority of the husband.

Why is the headship-submission issue so important? Scanzoni and Hardesty, who claim to argue for the feminists from scripture, sarcastically say,

Many Christians consider the inclusion of the word "obey" in the marriage vow almost as a badge of orthodoxy. They are alarmed that many modern wedding ceremonies omit this wifely pledge. "Father is no longer given his rightful place!" worried pastors lament. There are dire predictions of the demise of the family, the emasculation of husbands, the delinquency of children and the horrible spectre of a society dominated by power hungry women.<sup>5</sup>

Scanzoni and Hardesty do not miss much in describing what some fear as consequences of a major change in the traditional husband-wife roles.



Marriage, and especially Christian marriage, has historically assumed the headship and submission roles for husbands and wives respectively. To change or eliminate that fundamental assumption would greatly alter the character of the marriage relationship. At this point, there is no conclusion drawn that the result of such a change would be either good or bad. Some hope the change would be for the better, others fear it will be for the worse. But all agree that there would be very significant changes in the husband-wife relationship if the headship and submission roles are altered.

The headship-submission issue then, has great practical importance because its resolution determines, to a great extent, how husbands and wives will relate to each other. But there is also a theological importance, especially for the Christian. This is because the traditional roles have a scriptural basis. The question, then, is not just practical: which alternative works best, or which alternative do I like best. The question is ultimately theological and scriptural: God has spoken on this issue, what did He say?

The biblical passages which focus on the headship-submission issue raise an interpretation problem. Does Scripture say that wives are to submit and husbands are to be the head or does it say something else? The key passages which relate to this issue are listed below for information

and future reference.

". . . your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16).

"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3).

"Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:22-24).

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (Col. 3:18).

"In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. And let not your adornment be external only--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, and putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, and you have become

her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Pet. 3:1-7).<sup>6</sup>

The headship-submission issue, then, becomes very important as a matter of obedience to God's word. Does the traditional view of headship and submission truthfully reflect the teachings of Scripture? If not, does the feminist emphasis on equality accurately reflect biblical truth? Or perhaps both sides have some truth and some error necessitating a third alternative to accurately describe husband-wife roles from a biblical perspective.

This book will attempt to explore some of the arguments and some of the data to find the truth concerning the headship-submission issue in the husband-wife relationship. What is God's design?



## CHAPTER II

### WHAT IS THE ARGUMENT?

Male and female are biological categories. Masculine and feminine are cultural categories.<sup>1</sup>

This role relationship was established by God in the way He created man and woman in relation to one another and continues to manifest itself through the aspect of masculinity and femininity.<sup>2</sup>

In an article dealing with the question, "Should husband and wife maintain distinct gender-based roles in marriage?" A. Duane Litfin notes that the argument has been very one-sided.<sup>3</sup> "A quick survey of the battlefield seems to indicate that those who would answer the above question with a no (the feminists) have gained a current advantage against their well-entrenched opponents by a bold and daring foray into the realm of the Bible and theology."<sup>4</sup> "Those who would answer the question with a yes (the traditionalists) seem to have been caught off guard by this attack and have perhaps not yet regained their composure."<sup>5</sup>

There is, of course, another group of feminists who are not included in Litfin's observation because they are athiest or agnostic and could care less what the Bible says. They, too, have been very vocal on the subject of husband-wife roles. The arguments for and against this group are purely on a legal and practical level since they deny the



authority of the Bible.

While good practical arguments can be made, we have already seen that the argument is ultimately theological and scriptural. The Bible is the reason for the traditional viewpoint on husband-wife roles. That is where the battle must ultimately be fought for Christians.

#### The Feminist Argument

I am woman, hear me roar  
in numbers too big to ignore,  
and I know too much to go back to pretend  
'cause I've heard it all before  
and I've been down there on the floor,  
no one's ever gonna keep me down again.<sup>6</sup>

As noted earlier, the feminist side is on the offensive. The words of the song above summarize their sentiments. The feminists view women as the oppressed under-dog in need of liberation.

While some adherents to the feminist side strive toward female domination or supremacy in society, most are seeking what they call, "equality." William Lederer says,

If workable marriages are to exist in this latter part of the 20th Century, the artificially determined roles of male and female must be discarded and replaced. The rigid male-dictated marital structure . . . cannot function in today's environment. Neither can the extreme feminist dream of female domination. Modern marriage requires equality, just as world history indicates a trend toward equality among people regardless of sex, race, or creed.<sup>7</sup>

The rebellion is two-pronged. First, feminists oppose female exclusion from traditionally male roles. Second, they reject the enforced imposition of traditionally feminine

roles on women. Joyce Treblicot develops three arguments from nature, all of which point to the conclusion that there are natural, gender-based roles for men and women.<sup>8</sup> But after proving to herself that sex roles are inevitable, necessary, and more efficient, she denies any logical justification for enforcing them.<sup>9</sup> She believes that the question of sex roles can only be decided on the basis of what kind of society is morally justifiable.<sup>10</sup>

Dorothy Sayers wants to be treated as a human being and not be unjustifiably restricted just because she is a woman. Writing the introduction to Dorothy Sayers' book, Mary Shideler says, "We are all equal in our creaturehood, whatever our sex, color, age, background, or abilities. But we are all different in the functions we were created to perform."<sup>11</sup> Just as all humans were not created to be or do the same thing, neither were all women.<sup>12</sup> She acknowledges that, ". . . biological characteristics determine in part the kind of work that any given human being is capable of."<sup>13</sup> But then she observes that, "degrees of bodily strength, muscular coordination, auditory and visual acuity, stolidity and excitability cut across the classifications by sex, color, background, age and intelligence."<sup>14</sup> In other words, whatever roles are assigned should be made appropriate to the individual rather than to the sex.<sup>15</sup>

The three arguments presented so far are historical, moral, and individuality. It might help to see these argu-

ments in syllogistic form. Lederer is saying: A. The trend of history is toward equality among people and away from discrimination because of sex, race, or creed. B. The marital relationship should follow this trend of history. C. Therefore, there should be equality between husband and wife.<sup>16</sup>

Treblicot's syllogism would be: A. Only morally justifiable roles should be enforced. B. Gender-based roles are not morally justifiable. C. Therefore, gender-based roles cannot be enforced. Shideler's (and Sayers') argument would be: A. The roles assigned to any person should be appropriate to that unique person. B. Individual characteristics and abilities transcend sexual boundaries. C. Therefore, sex should not be a factor in role assignments.

There is also a legal argument from the feminist side. Primarily, it is a constitutional argument against discrimination because of sex. The feminists argue that it is just as unfair to discriminate against a person because of sex as it is to discriminate because of race. The main effect of this stand on the marriage relationship would be legal and economic regarding marital property and the legal status in disagreements. The syllogism would be: A. The Constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens. B. Women are citizens. C. Therefore, women should have the same rights as men.

The final category of arguments is the scriptural category. The two books which deal scripturally with the



male-female role question in depth are All We're Meant to Be by Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, and Man As Male and Female by Paul K. Jewett. While the two arguments are similar in many ways, they both approach the question differently.

Scanzoni and Hardesty start with the assumption that women are oppressed and need liberation.<sup>17</sup> Then, discussing hermeneutics, they conclude there is a *locus classicus* which gives the major biblical statement on any given subject.<sup>18</sup>

They say,

Passages which deal with an issue systematically are used to help understand incidental references elsewhere. Passages which are theological and doctrinal in content are used to interpret those where the writer is dealing with practical local cultural problems.<sup>19</sup>

Scanzoni and Hardesty have identified Galatians 3:28 as the *locus classicus* for Christian male-female relationships.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).<sup>20</sup>

Galatians 3:28, then is the basis on which Scanzoni and Hardesty claim equality for women. This would be the doctrinal passage on the subject of male-female relationships in their words. All the other passages referring to women, they say, are of the practical or cultural nature and therefore must be interpreted according to the doctrine revealed in Galatians 3:28.<sup>21</sup>

There is another aspect to hermeneutics which Scanzoni and Hardesty call the theological interpretation. By this they mean, ". . . an attempt to go beyond the letter to



the spirit of the biblical teachings."<sup>22</sup> An example of such theological interpretation is Jesus when he ". . . interpreted theologically the commandment about not committing adultery. He went beyond the letter of the law to disclose its spirit--a spirit that can be violated in thought and attitude completely apart from a sexual act (Matt. 5:27-28)."<sup>23</sup>

When this hermeneutic is applied to the passages on male-female relationships, especially Galatians 3:28, the conclusion is that men and women are equal in every respect. All We're Meant to Be compares the traditional view with this egalitarian view saying,

A traditional view of marriage stressed such matters as respect, duty, authority, obedience, and role differentiation. Today, another ideology emphasizes the importance of companionship, affection, self-actualization, growth, and equalitarianism. In such marriages, the partners recognize each other as unique individuals rather than as role or sex stereotypes.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, the equality is total and does not allow for any headship of the husband or submission of the wife.

The practical application of this calls for each party to the marriage to be considered an equal partner. This will necessitate flexibility and change with respect to the traditional patterns.<sup>26</sup> "No longer is there a clear-cut demarcation between 'woman's' work and 'man's' work. No longer can it be asserted that 'woman's place is in the home' or that 'God has ordained the man to be the breadwinner.'"<sup>27</sup>

A syllogism for the above argument obviously has to be simplified because there are many syllogisms in such a

complex argument. But it might go something like this:

- A. For any given question there is a classic biblical passage which gives the major biblical statement on the matter.
- B. The major biblical statement on male-female relationships is Galatians 3:28.
- C. Therefore, it is concluded that men and women are equal in all things.

While Scanzoni and Hardesty approach the problem exegetically and hermeneutically, Jewett's argument is more theological and logical. Actually, he has two arguments concerning headship and submission. The first is the more theological and the second is more logical in nature.

Jewett first argues positively for the equality (which, of course, assumes no headship and submission) of men and women. He does this on the basis of man being created in the image of God. He says first that there are, ". . . three schools of thought about the sexual polarity of man's existence."<sup>28</sup> "First of all, there is the position that the male/female distinction has nothing to contribute to our understanding of Man as created in the divine image."<sup>29</sup> Second, ". . . while the male/female distinction is not an essential part of the doctrine of Man, it is evident from Scripture that both male and female alike, . . . participate in the divine image."<sup>30</sup> "According to the third view, to be in the image of God is to be male and female."<sup>31</sup> In other words, according to this third view, it is the fellowship of male and female that is the image of God in mankind.

Jewett opts for the third view. This view is grounded on Genesis 1:27. "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27).<sup>32</sup> According to Jewett, Genesis 1:27b ("male and female He created them") is an exposition of 1:27a ("in the image of God He created him").<sup>33</sup>

In taking this view, Jewett is following Karl Barth. The argument says that God is not a solitary God but a triune God, a "God in relationship."<sup>34</sup> None of the other animals have mutual and reciprocal relationships as people uniquely have. People are made to respond in this mutual, reciprocal and personal way to God and to other people. They are made this way because they are in the image of the Triune God.<sup>35</sup> "Humanity that is not shared is inhumanity. And ultimately this mode of Man's being as shared humanity is what it is because Man is like God."<sup>36</sup>

In other words, "As God is a fellowship in himself (Trinity) so Man is a fellowship in himself, and the fundamental form of this fellowship, so far as Man is concerned, is that of male and female."<sup>37</sup> Jewett then concludes, that such a view of the nature of mankind, ". . . implies a partnership in life."<sup>38</sup>

A syllogism for this part of Jewett's argument might be: A. Man is created in the image of God. B. The image of God in Man is the fellowship of male and female. C. Therefore, men and women are equal.



In his second argument, Jewett presents a negative case against headship and submission. His two main points are: 1. Subordination of women also means they are inferior.<sup>39</sup> 2. To argue for subordination of women on the basis of Ephesians 5:22 also requires one to argue in favor of slavery.<sup>40</sup> Jewett rejects the notions that women are inferior and that the Bible endorses slavery. He finds biblical support for these conclusions in Galatians 3:28 just as Scanzoni and Hardesty do.

Jewett's second syllogism might be: A. To argue for the subordination of women would mean that women are inferior and slavery is desirable. B. Women are not inferior and slavery is not desirable. C. Therefore, women are not subordinated.

These arguments from the feminist side, while not exhaustive, are certainly representative. They would all classify the past examples of male dominance and female submission as being culturally based and without any moral or legal justification. They all conclude that in the marriage relationship, there should be total equality with neither partner having authority over the other and neither submitting to the other. They also agree that whatever general differences there are between men and women, whether physical, intellectual, or psychological, do not make any difference as far as husband-wife roles are concerned.



### The Traditional Arguments

I do regard this role relationship not as one that is assigned in the drama of life by our culture or society, but as one that is ordained by God for all cultures, societies, and times.<sup>41</sup>

The arguments on the traditional side come almost exclusively from evangelical Christians. There are some practical arguments for the headship of the husband and submission of the wife, but even those are seldom made except by the evangelicals. The above quote by Knight generally summarizes the sentiment on the traditional side.

Since the feminist side has been on the offensive and the traditionalists are not trying to promote something new, the arguments on the traditional side are mainly a reaction to the feminist challenge. In Knight's book on the role relationships of men and women, he deals primarily with the biblical and theological arguments of Scanzoni and Hardesty, and Jewett. He notes that, "These authors focus on the necessity for equality in the male-female relationship and presume that this focus rules out prescribed differences in function in the role relationship."<sup>42</sup> To this observation, Knight says,

I disagree. I believe that equality and difference of role are not mutually exclusive but are indeed the two sides to the teaching of the Word of God on the subject. It is significant that the apostle Peter joins the two notes of equality and difference of roles in his treatment of the marriage relationship in 1 Peter 3:1-7. While Peter appeals to the husband to honor his wife as a "fellow heir"--that is as his equal--he also urges the husband to recognize his wife's femininity (as the "weaker vessel") and the wife to submit to her husband.<sup>43</sup>

Knight also observes the equality with role differences in comparing Galatians 3:28 with Ephesians 5:22 and Colossians 3:18-19. He says that equality and role differences are compatible.<sup>44</sup>

Knight sees an open discussion of husband-wife roles as being desirable to help Christians come to a clear and balanced understanding of biblical teaching on male-female roles.<sup>45</sup> But, he adds, some on the feminist side, like Jewett, deny the inerrancy and authority of the Bible to support their view. Jewett, he claims, ". . . says that Paul is wrong in his evaluation of the relationship of man and woman . . ."<sup>46</sup>

Knight also deals with the argument in Jewett's book which connects the slavery issue to submission. His response is threefold. First, Knight says that Paul, ". . . only tells the slaves and masters how they should conduct themselves in the situation in which they find themselves . . ."<sup>47</sup> "Paul does not argue, . . . that these are God-ordained roles established by God."<sup>48</sup> Second, "I Corinthians 7:20 demonstrates that Paul's approach to life is to direct men to live as Christians in whatever condition they are . . ."<sup>49</sup> Third, Paul was not advocating slavery. But recognizing its existence, he was used by God in his apostolic office to regulate it.<sup>50</sup>

Knight's first argument might be summarized by the following syllogism: A. Equality and different roles are



not mutually exclusive. B. The Bible teaches both the equality and different roles for men and women. C. Therefore, men and women are equal but have different roles assigned by God. The second argument might appear as:

A. Paul talks about marriage and slavery in the same context.

B. God ordained the marriage relationship but not the slavery relationship. C. Therefore, arguing for submission of the wife to her husband does not mean one must also endorse slavery to be consistent.

Litfin expresses his desire to seek a balance. He recognizes that there have been abuses on both sides. The practical outworkings of both the feminist view and the traditional view has led to excesses in opposite directions. But the need, according to Litfin, is not for balance in definition of the roles, but in the behavior of men and women acting out their roles.<sup>51</sup>

Concerning the definition of the roles of husband and wife, Litfin is also reacting on the defensive. First he describes generally the exegesis of those who espouse the feminist doctrine as that of a magician, making the Bible appear to say things that it does not really say.<sup>52</sup> Second, he says, "Subordination does not automatically or inevitably imply inferiority. It has often been noted that within the Godhead full equality coincides with subordination, without any hint of inferiority being attached."<sup>53</sup>

In a unique study of the authority of the husband,



Litfin notes that there are different kinds of authority. The particular kind of authority that the husband has in his headship role is positional authority. This kind of authority is delegated to the husband by God. It is given to the husband not because of any inherent virtue or superiority on his part, but because of the position God has given him in society.<sup>54</sup> This kind of authority would, of course, not be incompatible with equality.

Litfin also describes the balanced functioning of the headship and submission roles. The husband and wife are to live together in symbiotic relationship. Symbiosis, ". . . is a biological term referring to two different organisms living in close association or union, especially where such an arrangement is advantageous to both."<sup>55</sup>

Litfin says that it is the failure to obtain this symbiotic balance as God intended that has given the feminists some legitimate cause for complaint.<sup>56</sup>

A syllogism to describe Litfin's argument might be:

- A. When properly exegeted, the Bible teaches headship of the husband and submission of the wife.
- B. When properly exegeted, the Bible teaches equality of the husband and wife.
- C. Therefore, these two principles are both to be held in balance.

William Counts also takes issue with Scanzoni and Hardesty on the meaning of headship. Scanzoni and Hardesty suggest that the Greek word for head, κεφαλή, can mean

"source."<sup>57</sup> This notion probably originated with Stephen Bedale.<sup>58</sup> Counts dismisses this argument by noting that Bedale himself says that in Paul's view, the consequence of κεφαλή is that the wife is subordinate and that κεφαλή always carries with it connotation of authority.<sup>59</sup>

In the question of male-female differences, Counts challenges the thesis of Scanzoni and Hardesty that, ". . . only physical structure distinguishes male from female."<sup>60</sup> He says,

In my opinion, neither they nor any other feminist have yet come close to demonstrating such an assertion. For example, every known society in human history has been patriarchal--men have assumed direct leadership both inside and outside the home on a broad level.<sup>61</sup>

To support this conclusion, he cites the studies of Paul Webster and Margaret Mead and the New Encyclopedia Britannica.

Knight, Litfin, and Counts all offered arguments pertaining to Scripture and theology. If the exegesis of the evangelicals is correct, one would expect that there would be practical evidence to support their conclusions. Paul Meier observes from the medical field of psychiatry that, ". . . a domineering, smothering mother and a weak father lie at the root of the vast majority of mental illness in children. Most mentally disturbed adults come from that type of heritage also."<sup>62</sup> He contrasts this kind of role relationship which causes many problems as being just the opposite of the headship of the husband and submission of the wife which Paul describes in Ephesians 5:23 and Colossians 3:18.

Meier also observes five factors found in mentally healthy families. The factors are love, discipline, consistency, example of the parents, and a man at the head of the home.<sup>63</sup> Then, considering these professional and scriptural observations, he urges women especially not to yield to the increasing pressure of the feminist movement.<sup>64</sup>

William McRae also concludes from his counseling experience that two basic problem areas are the source of most marriage problems between husbands and wives. One is the failure of the wife to submit. The other is the failure of the husband to love.<sup>65</sup> Wayne Colwell also concludes that role reversal (weak husband and assertive wife) is a common source of marital pressure.<sup>66</sup>

These arguments from the traditional side are no more exhaustive than those on the feminist side. Some traditionalists acknowledge abuses of husbands who have used headship as a license to take advantage of their wives. Traditionalists generally affirm that Scripture teaches headship and submission as God's design for the respective roles of the husband and wife. They also claim that families are healthier and have fewer problems when these designed roles are practiced.

There is one other area of argument that has been mentioned but not fully explored by either side. This area is differences between men and women. In an effort to provide fresh insights to the question of husband-wife roles, this



author will explore the male-female differences in a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

I believe that the Bible teaches that men and women are emotionally, psychologically, intellectually, volitionally and constitutionally different from one another.<sup>1</sup>

In some ways, men and women cannot be distinguished from one another. This, no doubt seems like an accurate statement of the obvious. But it is made for a purpose. This author would stand on the traditional evangelical side of the role question and to some that would automatically indicate that he exaggerates the differences and does not fully recognize the similarities of men and women. It is the purpose of this chapter to communicate what has been learned as this author attempted to discover how men and women are different and how they are the same. The emphasis will be on the differences because it appears that this is the neglected side of the question in the ongoing argument over roles between feminists and traditionalists. The opening statement of this paragraph was made to call attention to the fact that this author recognizes the similarities while he emphasizes the differences in this chapter.

Men and women are the same. Men and women are different. At first blush these two statements would seem to contradict each other. They are both true. Both sexes have

eyes and arms and legs that come in pairs. Both have hearts and minds. Both have needs and desires. Both are creatures of God, human beings yet bearing His image. Both have responsibilities placed on them by God. Both come in all sizes, shapes and colors, and have all different kinds of strengths, weaknesses, and abilities. BUT! men and women also have characteristic differences which distinguish them from each other. There is no indication that these differences negate the principle of equality. Women are not superior to men or vice versa, but there are distinctive differences. In this chapter equality and common characteristics of men and women is assumed, while the differences are explored and emphasized.

First, there are some obvious and universally recognized physical differences. Women develop breasts, men do not. The pelvic structure and sex related organs are different in men and women. Babies are conceived in women. Men have no similar experience. On the average, men are taller, heavier, and physically stronger than women. To these observations the response, especially from the feminist side is, so what? What difference do these differences make?

The necessary conclusion for the feminists is that the differences are of no significance beyond the obvious physical implications. In other words, women wear bras and carry babies, some men are stronger than some women, and that is about all it means. It is said that this is a necessary conclusion for the feminists because if they acknowledged



that physical differences have any serious psychological or emotional consequences which make characteristic gender distinctions, then there may be grounds for saying that certain roles are more or less appropriate for a person based on that person's sex. This argument is made, not to decide the issue, but to establish a principle concerning gender-based roles. If men and women are the same except for their sex organs, there is no justification for distinguishing between them in any important way. But if they are characteristically different in several important ways, then distinctions may be justified when the differences between the sexes significantly affect how women perform when compared to men or vice versa.

Again, it should be noted that equality is not in question here. The discussion is about differences, not superiority and inferiority. Difference and equality are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A dollar bill is equal in value to four quarters. But some machines will give four cups of coffee for the quarters and will give nothing for the dollar bill. Likewise, the metal would be very heavy if a man was trying to carry \$100.00 in his pocket. While the value of coins and currency is the same, one is more appropriate than the other for certain tasks. The same might be true of men and women if they are significantly different.

It is this author's conclusion that men and women are significantly different. One good way to see how differ-

ent the sexes are in some respects is to look at the hormones.

Androgens are known as the testicular or male hormones and are generated mainly by the male gonads or testes.<sup>2</sup> Estrogen and progestin are known as the ovarian hormones and are generated mainly by the female gonads or ovaries.<sup>3</sup> The female hormonal effects are cyclic between puberty and menopause and the cycle takes approximately thirty days.<sup>4</sup> During the time between menstruation and ovulation, estrogen has the dominant effect on the woman. After ovulation, the progestin effect dominates. When this effect is stopped, menstruation occurs. Menstruation itself produces an effect which stimulates the production of estrogen and the process repeats itself.<sup>5</sup> There is no similar hormonal change in men.

It appears that the sex hormones do not begin their work to any great degree until puberty. At that time, they confirm the sexual identity of the person with the appropriate secondary sex traits.<sup>6</sup> For a woman at puberty, the breasts begin to develop, the menstrual cycle begins, the ovaries begin their monthly ovulation, and she is physically ready to become a mother. There are other changes that occur, too. Characteristically, female hair patterns develop. The distinctive pelvic enlargement begins. The female fat and muscle characteristics appear, and she begins to experience the monthly female hormonal cycle.<sup>7</sup>

The appropriate secondary characteristics of a man

also begin to manifest themselves. The testes move down into the scrotum and begin to generate sperm. The prostate gland begins to generate seminal fluid and pressure. The male at this time is capable of becoming a father. He will also begin to experience erotic fantasies and nocturnal emissions. And he will feel the desire to masturbate.<sup>8</sup> Male hair distribution will also appear. The voice will become lower. And male muscle tone, form and strength will appear.<sup>9</sup>

These, of course, are not all the changes that occur at puberty. But they all occur apparently because of the hormonal action. This conclusion is indicated by the fact that the secondary sex characteristics never appear when the gonads are removed before puberty but they can be caused by the artificial administration of the appropriate sex hormones even after the gonads have been removed.<sup>10</sup> It is also noteworthy that the typical hormones of one sex can produce at least some of their secondary effects in a person of the opposite sex when administered appropriately.<sup>11</sup>

The effect of the sex hormones is not limited to the physical realm. These hormones have emotional and psychological effects also. Many questions are still unanswered concerning these effects, but certain observations can help to understand that there are characteristic psychological and emotional differences between men and women and that they are either caused or controlled by the sex hormones. Maternal behavior appears to be hormonally conditioned by the



ovarian hormones. Care of the young is greatly affected by estrogen.<sup>12</sup> Depression to various degrees is often experienced as a result of oral contraception therapy, pregnancy, and premenstrual tension when the progestin effect predominates. Estrogen administration is the most common treatment for such depression problems.<sup>13</sup> Erotic fantasies, nocturnal emissions, and masturbation are frequent among boys after puberty. Girls typically do not have orgasmic dreams, and are less likely to masturbate than boys.<sup>14</sup> When androgen is given to women, it increases sexual desire and the tendency to initiate sexual behavior. In fact, it appears very likely that androgen is the libido hormone for both sexes.<sup>15</sup> Androgen seems to have increased aggression as one of its dominant characteristics.<sup>16</sup> The kind of sexual desire a woman feels varies slightly with the different phases of her monthly cycle and her dreams are also affected by the different phases of that cycle.<sup>17</sup>

Obviously, this limited study does not answer all the questions concerning the differences between men and women. But it does indicate that there are some very distinct and characteristic differences between the sexes that would have significant effects on the relationships and roles of husbands and wives.

To summarize, it can be said that, as a general rule, men will be physically taller, heavier and stronger: they will be more aggressive, and their emotional and psychologi-

cal state will be more consistent when compared to women. Again, this summary is a generalization. But this medical confirmation takes it out of the realm of hearsay. The question to be answered next is, what does it mean? There is no easy answer to this question either.

It would seem unarguable from the above conclusion that in tasks which require strength and aggression (like football, for example), men have an advantage over women. Men will probably be superior football players compared to women. The same would probably be true in hand-to-hand combat. Of course, some men are smaller, weaker, and more timid than most, and some women are bigger, stronger, and more aggressive than most. Therefore, it is also true that some women would be better football players and better fighters than some men. But these men and women would be the exception rather than the rule.

How does this discussion relate to the question regarding the roles of husbands and wives? It is this author's conclusion that physical, emotional, and psychological differences are significant in determining husband-wife roles. Assuming that God created human beings in two different sexes and that He was not capricious in making the sexes different as has been observed, it would seem that the sex differences are best suited to fit the biblical role description.

Physical strength and psychologically aggressive ten-

dencies would logically be more appropriate for the headship role. Lesser physical strength and lesser aggressive tendencies would be more appropriate for the submission role. It would be harder to understand why God did not give men and women the same size, strength and psychological make up if He intended for them to be equally assertive or submissive. Likewise, considering pregnancy, childbirth, and breast feeding, it would be more difficult for a wife and mother to provide materially for her family than it could be for a man. And being the provider would more naturally fit the headship role.

The question still remains, what about the stronger, more aggressive woman? Neither she nor the weak and timid man would fit into their respective roles if the traditional view is correct. While this may be a more difficult situation to handle, it is not necessarily a theological contradiction. God does not give us all the same natural ability to share the good news of Jesus Christ, but He does expect us all to do it. Likewise, some men are better suited for headship than others, and some women are better suited for submission than others. But, after allowing for individual differences, we are all expected to follow the scriptural exhortation concerning roles.

It is this author's opinion that the observed physical, emotional, and psychological differences between men and women tend to argue for the biblical view of husband-wife



roles. Whether or not the reader agrees with this conclusion, it does appear that the characteristic differences between the sexes are too great as to be insignificant with respect to marital roles. Men and women are too different for there not to be a difference in their marital roles. If this is true, then the burden is on the feminist side to devise a role model that is appropriate for the respective genders and that is still consistent with Scripture. Equality, as the feminists define it, does not seem to satisfy these requirements.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHERE TO NOW?

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned in the first chapter of this book, the real argument concerning the marital roles of headship and submission is theological and scriptural. All the evidence, all the data, and all the arguments do not prove anything by themselves except that a problem area exists. Scripture is the final test and the final authority when it speaks to an issue. God has spoken on the question of husband-wife roles: the only question that remains is, "What did He say?"

The reader must ultimately decide for himself what God meant, but since this author has strong opinions of his own, here are some personal thoughts on the material presented in this book.

First, the problem seems to have begun because of abuses on the traditional side. Some men have treated women as if the women were inferior, using the biblical role description of headship and submission as their excuse. The feminist side has reacted with an emphasis on equality of husbands and wives. This emphasis has resulted in abuses on

the other side. For all practical purposes, the feminists deny the differences between men and women, saying that the two sexes should be treated the same.

Headship and submission do not mean superiority and inferiority. Neither does equal mean same. The Bible seems to teach very clearly the equality of men and women (Gal. 3:28), and at the same time different roles for husbands and wives (Eph. 5:22-23). Equality would indicate that headship and submission do not mean superiority and inferiority. Likewise the different roles indicate that equality does not mean the same. It seems to be difficult to recognize or accept the idea that both concepts are true at the same time. The sexes are equal, but they have different roles.

Equality and difference are limitations on human behavior. People rebel against limitations imposed by God or anyone else. Perhaps the current situation is similar to the temptation in the Garden when Satan focused attention on the one limitation and avoided the great opportunity and freedom which surrounded that limitation. True, God limits marital behavior by equality and difference of roles. But beyond that, there is a tremendous amount of room for the individuality of each husband and wife to be considered in their own distinctive relationship.

Scanzoni and Hardesty say, "Why should individuals be consigned to roles limited by sexual designations rather than being allowed to develop fully their unique and varied



capabilities."<sup>2</sup> There is a better answer than just, "Because!" There are some roles that are assigned by God based on sex. When that is the case, there is no alternative. Obey God. But the limitations imposed by God on the husband-wife roles are very general. Only a small portion of the total relationship is dictated. There is still great latitude for both husbands and wives, ". . . to develop fully their unique and varied abilities." As a matter of fact, the Christian who did not develop his abilities would be a detriment to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:14-26).

While men are reacting to the feminists, it appears to be the women who are the most unhappy with the headship and submission roles. This would also appear to be the result of the abuse of headship on the part of the husband. While Ephesians 5:25 says that the husbands are to love their wives, ". . . just as Christ also loved the church . . ."<sup>3</sup>, the way that Jesus Christ loved the church was not something that took advantage of the church or gave any cause for Christians to be unhappy. It is, in fact, just the opposite. He was seeking the greatest good for the church so that the members of His body might be everything that God created them to be.

People on both sides complain about problems in marriage relationships. They blame the plan, and try to make it say something other than what it does say. Perhaps the real problem is not in the plan, but in the fallen creature. The

solution to this kind of problem is to change the creature, not the plan. The real solution to the husband-wife role problem is to abide in Jesus Christ (John 15:1-7).<sup>4</sup> As both partners change their wills to conform to the Father's, there will no longer be a conflict between His and theirs.

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